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                     UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
                     WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
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    BLACK LOVE RESISTS IN THE RUST )
    BY AND THROUGH ITS CO-DIRECTORS)
    NATASHA SOTO AND SHAKETA REDDEN)
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    AND ON BEHALF OF ITS MEMBERS
    AGENT OF JUST RESISTING, ET AL.)
 5
    (Via Zoom for Government)
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                                    )Case No. 1:18-cv-00719
                                                        (CCR)
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                     Plaintiffs,
                                     )
8
                                    ) December 14th, 2020
    VS.
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    CITY OF BUFFALO, N.Y., ET AL.
                                    )
    (Via Zoom for Government)
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                     Defendants.
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                    TRANSCRIPT OF STATUS CONFERENCE
              BEFORE THE HONORABLE CHRISTINA CLARE REISS
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                    UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
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    APPEARANCES:
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    For the Plaintiffs: NATIONAL CENTER FOR LAW AND
                          ECONOMIC JUSTICE
17
                          BY:
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                          BY: ROBERT EMMET QUINN, ESQ.
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                          Buffalo, NY 14202
                          (Via Zoom for Government)
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	1	APPEARANCES CONTINUE	D:
	2	Audio Recorder:	JANE KELLOGG
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	5		(716) 364-6449
	6		recorded with electronic sound recording,
1:55PM	7	transcript prepared	with computer-aided transcription.
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01:57PM	1	THE CLERK: Your Honor, we're here in the matter of
01:57PM	2	18-CV-719. This is Black Love Resists in the Rust, et al. v.
01:57PM	3	The City of Buffalo, et al. This matter is on for a status
01:57PM	4	conference. Counsel, please state your name and the party you
01:57PM	5	represent for the record. We'll begin with the plaintiffs.
01:57PM	6	MS. WILNER: Claudia Wilner from the National Center
01:58PM	7	for Law and Economic Justice for the plaintiffs. Good
01:58PM	8	morning, Your Honor.
01:58PM	9	THE COURT: Good morning.
01:58PM	10	MR. CHARNEY: Good morning, Your Honor. Darius
01:58PM	11	Charney from the Center for Constitutional Rights, also for
01:58PM	12	the plaintiffs.
01:58PM	13	MR. JOACHIM: Jordan Joachim, Covington and Burling,
01:58PM	14	also for the plaintiffs.
01:58PM	15	MR. QUINN: Is anyone else going to be appearing? If
01:58PM	16	not, I can note my appearance. Robert Quinn on behalf of the
01:58PM	17	defendants. Good morning, Judge.
01:58PM	18	THE COURT: Good morning. Does anybody object to the
01:58PM	19	Court taking up the motion to compel at the status conference?
01:58PM	20	It wasn't noticed for that, but everything seems to be
01:58PM	21	directed to that.
01:58PM	22	MR. CHARNEY: Plaintiffs do not have any objection,
01:58PM	23	Your Honor.
01:58PM	24	MR. QUINN: No objection, Judge.
01:58PM	25	THE COURT: All right. So, I'm going to start in an

odd direction, but there's a method to my madness. And first, 01:59PM 1 start things off on a positive note. You are not my most 2 01:59PM 3 contentious case in the Western District of New York. And I 01:59PM 01:59PM 4 give Mr. Quinn compliments for the duty of candor. So, it's 5 unusual for an attorney to say, I didn't do this. 01:59PM usually provide me with six reasons why they never had to do 6 01:59PM 7 it in the first place. 01:59PM 8 01:59PM

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So we at least have a fairly clear-cut -- this is what's been done, this is what has not been done. The explanation seems to be; one attorney, lots of work, pandemic. So, I'm not going to spend a lot of time on that, but we have to move the case forward if we're going to come up with a resolution.

Kicking off the low-hanging fruit first, here's what's going to happen with depositions. I'm going to have plaintiffs designate 20 to start. Make sure they count. Make sure that you are picking people that you need to depose. And then, we're going to circle back and talk about how many more. I did this in the dairy farmers anti-trust case part II. It worked to charm because we started out on the same place. I need 150 depositions. I need to depose everybody and everybody's organization.

Once we got through a chunk, the path forward became much more clear in that, key players were identified. People who had no relevant information were moved aside and it worked.

So I am going to order the plaintiffs to come up with a list

of 20 people they want to depose and they're going to let
Mr. Quinn know in two weeks. Any reason why two weeks would
not be enough to come up with that first list?

MR. JOACHIM: No, Your Honor.

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THE COURT: Okay. So, the depositions are going to get under way. I'm going to use the plaintiffs' reply to the motion to compel as my outline, for lack of a better resource. I thought it nicely encapsulated where things had shivered out after the defendants' opposition had been considered.

So, the first issue was whether or not you met and conferred and that the motion is right for resolution. Yes, you have. It could have been better, but this is not a case in which plaintiffs have done nothing or a case where the defendants have done nothing. You are at an impasse. We've got to move forward and I'm not going to have you go back to meet and confer, at least as a general proposition. With regard to certain subjects, we need to have a better hold on it.

The next issue is defendants cannot escape discovery by refusing to dedicate adequate resources. And I want to hear a little bit more from Mr. Quinn about what can be done about this situation, because all of the cases with very few exceptions seemed to have slowed down if not stopped by the pandemic. But all of the cases in the interest of justice need to march on. So what, if anything, can Mr. Quinn offer

us in terms of more resources to get this moving?

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MR. QUINN: Thank you, Judge. Well, we are working remotely currently. We currently have essentially one office person in every day. It's a different office person to take mail in and do things like that. I recognize that plaintiffs want to move things forward and I totally understand that and I understand where the Court is coming from, too and we are doing that. I've been doing my best to try to do all of these things at once.

I will -- I mean, we can do it two ways. We could invest some type of money in a vendor or something like that or I can try to see if -- because we do have, I think, three other attorneys who are admitted to practice in federal court. I can see if another attorney can come on with me to assist, specifically with the discovery things.

I don't think it would be reasonable to have someone come up to speed totally on the case and I would still handle it sort of as I have been, but to do the discovery, I can try to get another attorney to come on and help me with that. I think that would expedite things.

We are set up to work remotely now. We weren't at the beginning, but that would be one thing that I could certainly offer. If the Court wants more, I'll do what I can. As I sort of tried to indicate in our submission, we're not trying to delay this. We just have some limitations that I need to

work through. And it's no one's fault really, but it is what
it is and I can't -- I can only do one thing at a time, but we
can try to bring on another attorney if that would help
things.

THE COURT: All right. So, you will find in the course of this case that I'm quite a pushy person, but also pragmatic. So, some of these tasks are ministerial, would you agree with me?

MR. QUINN: Yes.

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THE COURT: All right. So, I would like you to investigate interns, paralegals, law students that don't have employment and are looking for it and I want you to look for an outside vendor or another attorney to bring on and I want you to do that within the next two weeks. Any reason why you can't do that and report to the plaintiffs and the Court about how that worked out?

MR. QUINN: No reason, Judge. We will do that.

THE COURT: The next issue that I want to talk to you about is the December 2019 order. And there's a number of different issues that are in the mix and I'm going to try to cover each of them and you're going to let me know if I missed out.

Let's talk about the ESI documents. And there has been some production. I'm glad to see the plaintiffs have been reasonable and agreed that the metadata doesn't need to be

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produced contemporaneously, but they don't want to wait until the end of the production for the metadata. And I'm going to start with plaintiffs as to a pragmatic, reasonable suggestion as to how we can move this along.

In other cases -- I have, for example, a Mega-FOIA case.

And we set a benchmark, okay? You've got to have five pages
every month. That's what you have to do. And it seems
nonsensical, but it actually works to just say yeah, every
month you have to be producing this many pages, this many
hits, you've got to have this progress report. So, let's hear
from plaintiffs on that.

MR. JOACHIM: Your Honor, that makes sense to us. I mean, I think the problem so far has been that the productions have been sporadic. There will be, you know, a certain few weeks where we're getting productions every few days, which is okay, but then there will be a month or two months where we just don't get anything, including in the last three weeks in fact, we haven't gotten any ESI productions. So, I think a benchmark that sort of keeps the flow going would make sense to us.

THE COURT: Would you like to recommend what you think is a reasonable benchmark?

MR. JOACHIM: I might -- if you wouldn't mind, I might take the time to consult with my colleagues about that, just because I think we need to think about, you know, what

sort of magnitude of page count or document count would sort 02:07PM 1 of make sense in this case. 2 02:07PM 3 THE COURT: Or a custodian. 02:07PM 02:07PM 4 MR. JOACHIM: Or a custodian, correct. 5 THE COURT: Can you have that conversation in two 02:07PM weeks and come up with a proposal that you will vet with 02:07PM 6 7 Mr. Quinn first and if you can't agree to, you can propose to 02:07PM 8 the Court? 02:07PM MR. JOACHIM: Yes. 9 02:07PM 10 THE COURT: Okay. And if -- Mr. Quinn, if you don't 02:07PM 11 like their benchmark, you be thinking about what benchmark you 02:07PM 02:07PM 12 could actually reasonably accomplish, because if I set a benchmark, I do expect it to be met. 02:07PM 13 That will be fine, Judge. And we sort of 02:07PM 14 MR. QUINN: 15 do that both at the same time because it might depend a little 02:07PM bit on, you know, who we can bring in to help. 16 02:07PM 17 THE COURT: Okay. I don't think there's anything 02:08PM 18 else about the ESI that I can say that would be of assistance, 02:08PM 02:08PM 19 but I'm happy to hear otherwise. Anything else on ESI? 20 MR. JOACHIM: I don't think so from plaintiffs. 02:08PM 21 MR. QUINN: Nothing from me, Judge. 02:08PM 22 THE COURT: All right. The next issue is the IAD 02:08PM files. And there is the issue of whether or not some of these 23 02:08PM files have been destroyed. And I'm kind of at a loss as to 24 02:08PM 25 what the situation is. So, I'm reading on Document 68, page 02:08PM

7, which is actually page 5 of the reply and it states as 02:08PM 1 "Beyond that troubling admission that certain IAD 2 following: 02:08PM 3 files were previously destroyed per record retention policies, 02:09PM plaintiffs offer little in the way of explanation for their 02:09PM 4 5 failure to comply with the Court's December 2019 order 02:09PM 6 considering IAD files." I assume that's a typo and that's 02:09PM 7 supposed to say defendants, correct? 02:09PM 8 MR. QUINN: Yes, Your Honor. 02:09PM 9 02:09PM

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THE COURT: And then, for example, defendants do not explain who destroyed the IAD files or when. The record retention policies themselves are phantoms that defendants refuse to locate and produce when plaintiffs first asked for them eight months ago. Defendants do not explain how it's possible that the Internal Affairs Division only kept the files in paper copies.

Defendants searched the contents of the file electronically using the IAPro System in July 2019, nor have defendants produced the full IAPro records for the relevant complaints. Disturbingly, defendants do not explain how the three IAD files, which were created after the complaint in this action was filed, could have been destroyed. And tellingly, defendants do not assert that they took any steps to preserve these clearly relevant files as required by the federal rules.

I don't think this is premature and I think we are at the

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point where a declaration that may create an adverse inference at trial is where we end up. These are the document retention policies. This is what happened to X, Y and Z file. This is what we have. Because it's time to nail down the facts on this particular subject matter. So, I'm going to start with the defendant and then, we'll move to the plaintiff.

MR. QUINN: I agree, Judge. And we do recognize the issues on this specific issue. The -- with respect to what has been produced, it's everything that we still have. We got the order. We produced all of the records that we still had. The other ones had previously been destroyed.

As to the dates of those destructions, I don't have any records which say this is the date that it was destroyed, this is the date that it was per record retention policies destroyed. That could be done through testimony or declaration and we would be happy to do that. It's not something I did, but we could take efforts to get information and explanations as to those dates.

The papers -- as to the specifics, the files themselves, so you know, the investigation, the statements, all of the documents are kept only on paper form. We do have an IAPro System which keeps track and that's how we were able to do the search and identify the particular files. We did that all, you know, sort of in good faith to try to move things forward and get through that specific issue, but the files themselves

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were not ever scanned or kept electronically, so they did not make it into like, a PDF form. But the paper copies we scanned, we provided in accordance with the Judge's order. We just don't have anything else to give.

As to the record retention, I'm just still a little unclear from our perspective and that absolutely has been impacted by the COVID. The police department, specifically like the staff, doesn't work in the buildings and no one is allowed in the buildings currently. But we can, if the Judge thinks this is right, we can investigate those things and provide a further and complete explanation as to what happened, when it happened and why it happened, basically in whatever time period the Court feels is appropriate.

THE COURT: All right. Because there is an answer to that question. You don't just destroy a file. Either you hope you have some kind of document destruction policy or you do it on a scheduled basis, but somebody doesn't just walk into your office and say, today I'm going to, you know, destroy a couple files. So -- and I don't think it's a complicated question, either. Okay. All right.

So. I'm thinking in the way of a declaration and I started out complimenting Mr. Quinn's candor. So, I expect a black/white, to-the-point description of what happened. And if it creates an adverse inference, so be it. It would be better to get the documents, but I'm hearing from Mr. Quinn

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that plaintiffs have everything that the defendants actually still possess. So, let's hear from the plaintiffs.

MR. CHARNEY: Thank you, Your Honor. We agree that a declaration is the best way forward at this point. I think we would just want to make sure that the declaration does either attach or specifically articulate what the department's document retention policy is, because that's something that we've -- as you've noted, we've been asking for a long time and really don't understand.

You know, we're confused, I think, because as Your Honor probably saw, we attached it as an exhibit to our motion.

We're having a hard time figuring out, you know, why some files from particular years were destroyed, but other files from the same years weren't. So, really getting a sense of, you know, what that policy is and what the rules are I think is really critical as well. So, we want to make sure that that is in the declaration, but we absolutely agree that a declaration is the best option at this point.

THE COURT: All right. So, here's what's going to happen next. Plaintiffs are going to, in 14 days, come up with the subject matters on which you are looking for a declaration. That gets the Court out of coming up with things that you then find insufficient. In Vermont, and I'm sure elsewhere, we have a phrase, "Pigs get fat and hogs get slaughtered".

02:27PM	1	So, I don't want you to be asking for the kitchen sink. I
02:27PM	2	want you to be reasonable. And then I want you to give it to
02:27PM	3	Mr. Quinn. If he doesn't have any problems with it, Mr. Quinn
02:27PM	4	I will give you then 30 days after you get that to produce a
02:27PM	5	declaration. And obviously, it's going to be difficult to
02:27PM	6	forecast this is enough time, but I'm thinking 14 days to come
02:27PM	7	up with a list, 30 days to answer it should be sufficient.
02:27PM	8	Any concern about that, Mr. Quinn?
02:27PM	9	MR. QUINN: No, Judge.
02:27PM	10	THE COURT: Okay.
02:27PM	11	MR. CHARNEY: Your Honor, could I just ask one
02:27PM	12	question in terms of process? So assuming, you know,
02:27PM	13	obviously if Mr. Quinn is okay with the subject matters, you
02:28PM	14	know, we can proceed. I guess my question is, if he does not
02:28PM	15	agree, if he thinks, for example, we've gone too broad or have
02:28PM	16	asked for the kitchen sink and we're unable to work that out,
02:28PM	17	should we
02:28PM	18	THE COURT: Come to me. Come see me.
02:28PM	19	MR. CHARNEY: Okay.
02:28PM	20	THE COURT: I will know what the kitchen sink looks
02:28PM	21	like, having seen it many times. So
02:28PM	22	MR. CHARNEY: Understood. Thank you, Your Honor.
02:28PM	23	THE COURT: Defendants' objections to plaintiffs'
02:28PM	24	other discovery requests, monthly and daily reports. This was
02:28PM	25	narrowed to monthly Housing Unit reports for January 1, 2018

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to the present. The first page is a Housing Unit and Strike Force details report from January 1, 2013 to the present and the narratives for 36 Strike Force daily reports and the defendants' response is that they don't think this is discoverable, but they're willing to engage in discussions.

So, this strikes the Court as within the scope of discovery and it also strikes the Court as something that could be ministerial so that it wouldn't take an attorney to find out whether this exists. Somebody who knows where to look could pull this up and it wouldn't be a deliberative process. It is either something that exists or doesn't exist. I may be oversimplifying what's at issue and I'm going to start with plaintiffs this time.

MR. CHARNEY: Your Honor, we absolutely agree that this information is discoverable and I think I would agree that there really isn't any deliberative process that has to happen about whether to turn them over.

I think the one question we have -- and this is one of the questions we raised with Mr. Quinn and have not yet had answered is -- there is sort of a technological hurdle here in that the previous samples of the first pages of those daily reports we received were printed or produced in a format where part of the page was cut off and Mr. Quinn has indicated he's still trying to figure out how to cure that formatting issue. We have not heard yet if there is a solution, but I think

that's really the only kind of hurdle to production but 02:30PM 1 otherwise, I think we agree that, you know, it's just a matter 2 02:30PM of locating the documents and producing them. 02:30PM 3 02:30PM 4 THE COURT: Mr. Quinn, let's hear from you on this 5 issue. 02:30PM 6 MR. OUINN: This is one of the issues that we were 02:30PM 7 really trying to work through. And you know, this is really 02:30PM 8 the genesis of the premature argument, because I think we are 02:30PM largely in agreement on a lot of this stuff. 9 02:30PM 10 The one slight disagreement, some of this would have to be 02:30PM 11 redacted, but then it would be a little bit more than 02:30PM 02:30PM 12 ministerial because they -- it very much is -- like the 13 monthly reports contain, you know, information about crimes 02:31PM and individuals and all those other things and I think we did 02:31PM 14 15 pretty much get to a place where we could agree on the 02:31PM redactions. It just would be a little more than a ministerial 16 02:31PM 17 act and we still are willing to agree --02:31PM 18 Let me stop you. Has everything been 02:31PM THE COURT: 02:31PM 19 pulled? So, ministerial is finding. Redacting, I agree, is 20 deliberative. But have you pulled all of this? 02:31PM 21 MR. QUINN: We've not pulled all of it. We have 02:31PM 22 pulled some of it. For instance, the, I believe, 36 02:31PM 23 identified dates, we did pull that and we would have to go 02:31PM 24 through it still, but some of it still would have to be pulled 02:31PM 25 depending on how things went. 02:31PM

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As to Mr. Charney's other point, he's correct. When we print them out -- and this is still the case because the recent production was in the same manner -- when they print it out, it does cut off part of the document. I haven't figured out a way around that. I will work with staff at the police department to see if there is a way to save it to PDF. That's what I've been doing with the emails and that seems to be agreeable. The plaintiffs seem to be agreeable to that. I will try to do that.

I've tried to do that in the past and I've been told that if someone who doesn't have the certain access is -- tries to do it, they're not able to. They have to print to screen and then paste it in a different document. I'll try to see if I can find that right person who does have that access can save to PDF for all the specific things that Mr. Charney identified.

Again, it wasn't intentional that this happened, but this is just the way that all the documents were produced and the only -- that we have previously known how, but we will try to -- if the Court advises, we will try to find a way around that.

THE COURT: So, I am going to order it, not just advise. And people, you know -- as you well know, task their clients you have to get this. And you have to -- it's got to be an un-cut off document. You're familiar with your system.

02:33PM	1	You figure it out. But that's what I need from you. And
02:33PM	2	we're at that stage. So, you know, if you ask me how to print
02:33PM	3	off something that is, you know, 11 by 14, I would turn to
02:33PM	4	somebody and say, you do it because I could spend hours
02:33PM	5	fooling around with that.
02:33PM	6	So, it's time to get somebody at the you know, from
02:33PM	7	your client who knows how to do it to get involved. How soon
02:33PM	8	can we clean up this particular issue in light of your
02:33PM	9	statement that you thought you were pretty close on this?
02:33PM	10	MR. QUINN: The redaction, if it is everything, the
02:33PM	11	redaction would take some time. I think if the Court orders
02:33PM	12	that everything be produced as they've asked, I think 30 days.
02:33PM	13	I could try to have it sooner, but we have done some of it and
02:33PM	14	it was something we've been working on the whole time.
02:34PM	15	THE COURT: All right. How about 45 days from today
02:34PM	16	and that's a real deadline?
02:34PM	17	MR. QUINN: That's fine.
02:34PM	18	THE COURT: If you can't meet it, there has to be a
02:34PM	19	reason and the reason has to be provided to plaintiffs and the
02:34PM	20	Court.
02:34PM	21	MR. QUINN: That's okay by me, Judge. Thank you.
02:34PM	22	THE COURT: Okay. Employment history. And here's
02:34PM	23	what I would suggest with regard to this. This comes up
02:34PM	24	fairly frequently and some of it is completely extraneous
02:34PM	25	information about Officer Farquad's (phonetic) pension plan or

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something that has nothing to do with this case. I suggest we tag employment history to depositions and that the documents related to disciplinary complaints or bonuses for Strike Force activity or something other than just saying we want employment history for the following people. Let's hear from plaintiffs first about this issue.

MS. WILNER: Thank you, Your Honor. Employment history in the context of this case is actually asking not for a blanket employment history of every officer, but for one specific piece of information for a few identified officers. And the specific information is the time periods in which those police officers were employed and working for the Strike Force and/or the Housing Unit and in some cases, the Traffic Unit.

The reason for this is that plaintiffs have contracted an expert who will be conducting a statistical analysis of the ticketing patterns. And the statistical analysis involves comparing tickets issued by Strike Force and housing officers with tickets issued by other units and the Traffic Unit is particularly relevant. And in order to conduct that statistical analysis, we need to be able to identify what unit an officer was in at the time the ticket was issued.

Unfortunately, we have very detailed data about tickets, but that one field that indicates the unit -- the officer unit -- is really not very well filled in in our data. And

so, that's why we need this employment information. 02:36PM 1 2 THE COURT: If it was -- the ticket itself, does your 02:36PM database indicate that in this regard? 3 02:37PM 02:37PM 4 MS. WILNER: We have, for each ticket, the name of 5 the officer who issued it and the date and time and location 02:37PM 6 of the ticket. We just don't have what unit that officer was 02:37PM 7 part of. And we had --02:37PM 8 THE COURT: I find that's relevant. So, I assume --02:37PM unfortunate, but you can do it in a back end of the 9 02:37PM 10 information looking at from the tickets issued, correct or --02:37PM 11 2012, that there are 10 officers, 10 disputed officers that 02:37PM 02:37PM 12 are issuing tickets in this relevant particular geographic area. I can make an assumption that those 10 people were 02:38PM 13 employed in a unit that was deployed there during that time 02:38PM 14 15 Is that not possible? 02:38PM period. MS. WILNER: Well, the Strike Force and the Housing 16 02:38PM 17 Unit were roving units that worked in different areas 02:38PM 18 throughout the city. And so, they would overlap with the 02:38PM 02:38PM 19 geographic unit officers. 20 If I may, I don't know if it might help to look at 02:38PM Exhibit 14, which is the spreadsheet that we sent to the 21 02:38PM 22 defendants to ask them to fill in the missing transfer 02:38PM 23 information. It's a really extremely narrow request at this 02:38PM 24 point, because after the first motion to compel, defendants 02:38PM 25 did provide a series of transfer orders. We did use the 02:38PM

transfer orders to identify all the dates that we could. 02:38PM 1 And so, the dates that weren't identifiable through the transfer 2 02:39PM order is what we have asked the defendants to provide. 02:39PM 3 02:39PM 4 you know, I think that much of this information may be 5 identifiable simply by asking the officers or their commanding 02:39PM 6 officers who may know when the officer transferred in and out 02:39PM 7 of the unit. I don't even know if that inquiry has been made. 02:39PM 8 THE COURT: Okay. So if you depose somebody, you 02:39PM could ask for their CV or their resume and you would have that 9 02:39PM 10 information that way, correct? 02:39PM 11 MS. WILNER: It's possible. I don't know if an 02:39PM 02:39PM 12 officer moved like say, from the D District to the Strike 13 Force and then back to the D District, I don't know if their 02:39PM CV or resume would say when they were in a particular unit, 02:39PM 14 15 but it's not a large number of officers that we're looking for 02:39PM 16 this information for. 02:40PM I would say there are roughly -- just looking -- 40 17 02:40PM 18 officers when we're looking for either a date that they 02:40PM 02:40PM 19 transferred out of or a date that they transferred into a 20 particular unit. And for most of those officers, we have one 02:40PM 21 of the dates but not the other. So, it's a very limited 02:40PM 22 inquiry, but it is important for a statistical analysis. 02:40PM 23 THE COURT: And do I have right that one of -- the 02:40PM 24 transfer out is not reported. They do keep track of 02:40PM 25 transferring in but not transferring out? 02:40PM

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MS. WILNER: I believe that that's the case in

transfer orders. They -- I believe -- and Mr. Quinn would

have a better sense of this, but they do have unit rosters.

So, there is other information within the police department

that would say, you know, where an officer was working at this

time.

And let me also add that in previous discussions -
because we've been discussing this for over a year --

And let me also add that in previous discussions -because we've been discussing this for over a year -Mr. Quinn had assured us that he was working on this, that he
would be able to provide the information next week, that they
had almost all of it, they were just finishing reviewing the
documents. And so, I am not certain even how much more work
remains to be done, but it is both extremely important to us
and very limited in what we have asked to be provided.

THE COURT: Okay. Let's hear from Mr. Quinn.

MR. QUINN: So, on this specific issue Judge, the problem really is that we've turned over the documents that would give you the best idea of the specific date that someone came in or left. With regard to leaving, it doesn't identify that you're going from X to Y, it just says you're going to Y. So, it's difficult to sort of backtrack that.

We have tried to look through daily reports to figure out, you know, did an officer work on this date and when was the last day that he shows up as working on the Strike Force before going somewhere else. The problem is, it's difficult

to nail down a date with any type of precision. So, while I'm 02:42PM 1 willing to work with the plaintiffs, I do think depositions 2 02:42PM would be the best way to do it. And maybe someone would be 02:42PM 3 able to come in and say, you know, I remember a specific date 02:42PM 4 5 that someone came in or someone left or something like that. 02:42PM 6 I don't know how precise I can get this beyond what has 02:42PM 7 already been provided. 02:42PM 8 THE COURT: So, here's some push back. It looks to 02:42PM me from the correspondence that you thought you could provide 9 02:42PM 10 this and this wouldn't be that problematic. Plaintiffs say 02:42PM 11 it's only one category of that and that's a really narrow 02:42PM 02:43PM 12 There has to be an answer at this point, I can 13 provide it or I can't provide it. Agreed? 02:43PM 14 MR. QUINN: Mostly, yes. Like I said, it is just the 02:43PM 15 specific issue of precision. So, I can say the last day we 02:43PM 16 have an officer being -- you know, being noted in the records 02:43PM 17 as working for Strike Force is October 25th, but does that 02:43PM 18 mean that he didn't work another day or that he didn't, you 02:43PM 02:43PM 19 know, he wasn't just there on that day visiting and he had 20 previously left, you know, six months before and was just 02:43PM 21 picking up an extra shift or something like that? That's the 02:43PM

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only push back I have.

Like I said, we've been trying to work on this and I can -- I guess I could provide an explanation as to that is that, you know, on October 24th, this person worked the shift

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for Strike Force and we don't have them working another shift after that, but I just -- I only hesitate because I don't know that that would give them the exact information that they are looking for, because I don't know that I can give it.

THE COURT: Okay. Well, sometimes people can't provide, you know, the exact information and they then have a duty under the discovery rules to provide as much information as they can.

So, I'm not going to require you to say or certify that this is the last day somebody worked if you don't have that information. You should provide the information that's readily available, as our records go up to October 25th, 2013 and we don't see that person again, then they can depose whoever they choose and follow up. And I would hope that the person would have some personal understanding of whether he or she worked at different locations, but we can get past this issue. How long would it take you to do that?

MR. QUINN: That would probably take -- because we've done most of the work already, it is largely ministerial.

That would take, at the most, 30 days.

THE COURT: All right. And let me hear from plaintiffs. Would that advance the ball enough for you in light of the fact that if they don't have it, they just don't keep information that particular way, there's no sense in us going around and around. And you are going to have an

independent source, which is the person himself or herself, to 02:45PM 1 2 answer in a deposition. 02:45PM 3 MS. WILNER: I think we would like to take the best 02:45PM 02:45PM 4 information that they have, but I would like to speak to the 5 deposition issue, because there are approximately 40, maybe 02:45PM 6 more, officers for which we need a small piece of 02:45PM 7 information -- the best information possible -- about when 02:45PM 8 they began or ended working in a particular unit. Now, I 02:45PM don't think that we actually need to take depositions of all 9 02:45PM 10 of those officers --02:45PM 11 THE COURT: Why couldn't you do that --02:45PM 02:46PM 12 MS. WILNER: -- limited to 20 depositions 13 initially --02:46PM 14 Let me stop you. Why can't you do that 02:46PM 15 now in a request to admit Officer Patterson had his last shift 02:46PM on X force on October 15th, 20-whatever? And then Mr. Quinn 16 02:46PM 17 goes to the officer and I have got to admit this or deny this. 02:46PM 18 Yes, that's right. Why wouldn't that get you there cheaply, 02:46PM quickly and about as solidly an answer as you possibly can 02:46PM 19 20 02:46PM get? MS. WILNER: Well, we could try that. We did pose it 21 02:46PM 22 as an interrogatory. It wasn't a request for documents. 02:46PM so, I do think that Mr. Quinn could -- has the responsibility 02:46PM 23 24 to speak to the officers and see if he can uncover some of 02:46PM 25 this information from them. And I think it makes more sense 02:46PM

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for him to speak to this limited number of officers and provide the best information that he can as opposed to requiring us to take 40 depositions just to know the dates of their employment, when the dates of their employment is. It's important to our statistical analysis, but it's not -- some of these officers may be important for us to take depositions of, you know, for other reasons, but likely not all of them.

THE COURT: Okay. Well, it doesn't sound to me like depositions are actually the least expensive way to go about this. Mr. Quinn tells me in 30 days he can give you the best information that he has on this issue. I'm going to order it. I'm not going to order him to do something he can't do. If you decide you want to follow up with request to admit to get a yes, no, thumbs up, thumbs down, that's your choice. But information is going to be provided to you in due course, okay?

MS. WILNER: That sounds good. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: So, let's move on to the next issue which is the CCRCR complaints. And at this point, the defendants have said they are not aware of any responsive documents at this time. And the plaintiffs push back and say, it looks like you've only looked in paper form. So, with regard to this issue, are we at the declaration point, should it be added to Mr. Quinn's list of things to tell us yes, this

exists, no, it does not and I'm going to start with Mr. Quinn 02:50PM 1 this time. 2 02:50PM 3 MR. QUINN: This is one where we did feel it was a 02:50PM 02:50PM 4 little premature and it is because of my explanation. 5 searched all places where we knew documents were. 02:50PM 6 included -- and I believe I put this in the affidavit reaching 02:50PM 7 out to the current head. The current head is also working 02:50PM 8 from home. 02:50PM I have not eliminated the possibility that additional 9 02:50PM 10 documents exist. I do need some time to do that, and that was 02:50PM 11 where we were when this motion was made. I believe we have 02:50PM 02:50PM 12 searched diligently. This has really been impacted by the COVID thing because it was a relatively new person at the head 02:50PM 13 of this organization or entity or whatever it is and they just 02:50PM 14 15 were unfamiliar with it. And then we had, unfortunately, 02:50PM people leaving and trying to work from home. So this, I do 16 02:50PM 17 want to continue searching. 02:51PM 18 THE COURT: Is there a complainants database? 02:51PM 02:51PM 19 MR. QUINN: I'm sorry, what is that, Judge? 20 THE COURT: Is there a complainants database? 02:51PM 21 I don't believe so. 02:51PM MR. QUINN: 22 THE COURT: 02:51PM Okay. 23 My understanding is all the records were MR. QUINN: 02:51PM 24 kept in paper form. 02:51PM 25 All right. Because the plaintiffs say THE COURT: 02:51PM

that what you have produced refers to a complainants database, 02:51PM 1 which doesn't have to be electronic. It could be paper. 2 02:51PM Okay. All right. So, how much time do you need to do what 02:51PM 3 02:51PM 4 you need to do; either to produce a declaration that says I 5 don't have it, or to finish your search and be able to just 02:51PM answer, this is what I have and what I don't have in light of 02:51PM 6 7 your representation that this is under way? 02:51PM 8 MR. QUINN: For this specific one and given sort of 02:51PM our growing list of commitments, I probably would ask for 9 02:51PM 10 60 days to do this one, Judge, just because it might be that I 02:52PM 11 can -- that the government -- could say no additional 02:52PM 02:52PM 12 documents exist, but I want to make sure I have searched all 13 the places that I can and I don't -- we're not at the point 02:52PM where I can say I know it would be here, I know it would be 02:52PM 14 15 This is just an entity that we're trying to work 02:52PM through figuring out where all possible things could be. 16 02:52PM 17 I think 60 days would be better for us for this. 02:52PM 18 THE COURT: Let me hear from the plaintiffs on this 02:52PM 02:52PM 19 issue. 20 MR. CHARNEY: Yes, Your Honor. I think 60 days seems 02:52PM a little long for us. I understand Mr. Quinn's limitations 21 02:52PM 22 and the challenges he's working with in terms of other 02:52PM 23 agencies. I just would note for the record that, you know, we 02:52PM 24 originally requested these materials in August of 2019, which 02:52PM 25 was obviously seven months before pandemic. So, I think, you 02:52PM

know, we still have a question as to why the search wasn't 02:52PM 1 made before then but, you know, we are where we are but, you 2 02:52PM know, I do agree that there needs to be a court-imposed 02:53PM 3 deadline about when Mr. Quinn will complete his search. 02:53PM 4 5 And the only other thing I'd mention is, you know, again, the 02:53PM 6 documents he has produced, there is a record we attached as an 02:53PM 7 exhibit to our motion in which the commission itself in one of 02:53PM 8 its meetings does discuss the complainant database. 02:53PM The last thing I would mention is that if you look at the 9 02:53PM

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The last thing I would mention is that if you look at the spreadsheet of the IAD files that we also attached, it does make reference to, I believe, one of two complainants that were referred from this commission to Internal Affairs. So, that would suggest that, you know, the commission that does have some record of at least a few complaints that are irrelevant.

THE COURT: Okay. Sixty days is the deadline.

Either there's a production or there's a certification that nothing exists. Next category, fourth set of RFPs and RFP 76 and I am going to start with plaintiffs on this issue.

MR. JOACHIM: Yes, Your Honor. So, we served the fourth RFPs about seven months ago. RFP 76 was served in August 2019. And to our understanding, defendants have not produced any documents in response to these. They have made conclusory objections. They have advised us that they are searching for documents and that they would tell us when those

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searches are complete, but we have not heard anything further from them on that, despite us following up a number of times.

And Your Honor just, at this point, we just need defendants to produce these documents because we don't think they've asserted any valid objections.

THE COURT: Let's hear from the defendants.

MR. QUINN: So, for this one, I don't believe we have actually met and conferred. Plaintiffs characterize our objections as boilerplate. I provided our objections and I also provided my affirmative attempts to say, here are the issues we have with these objections in an email sent that same day, which has never really been responded to. So, I mean, it's tough to address these — this part of the motion, because they never really tried to work with us to figure out what is the issue.

We believe our objections are valid and we go through that for all those reasons in our opposition to their motion. I mean, if there are specific issues they want to work through or things that they want to identify as to what they are looking for and why they need it, I'm happy to do that, but I don't believe they've done that yet.

THE COURT: All right. When I hear fourth set of request to produce, that's a lot of discovery. So, this is a big case, it's an important case, but that's a lot of requests as well. And I do want you to work through this and pick off

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the ones that you can resolve easily between the two sides and narrow for me the ones that you cannot. And I will consider this kind of the crux of the motion to compel.

And keep in mind that the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure indicate that the parties -- the Court shall order attorneys fees if the opposition or the request is not well-grounded. So, I want you to took a hard look at what you've asked for and I want you to take a hard look at what you have answered. And I want you to bring to me only what you truly cannot resolve yourselves.

So, I'm envisioning I would be looking at a handful of these production requests and I would be able to say to myself clearly not covered by any prior request, clearly within the scope of discovery, clearly insufficient answers. It's inconceivable that it wouldn't exist. And I think that alone, that process, is going to narrow them, because I'm having a hard time envisioning that you get to your fourth set and you're missing crucial documents for your case when there are an abundance of experienced counsel for the plaintiffs.

And so, you know, I want to make sure that if I'm going to be resolving a discovery dispute, it's a real one, it's important to the case, the objections are baseless and I should be ordering or granting a motion to compel, denying a motion to compel and awarding attorneys' fees. So, I'm going to give you 60 days for that process. It's not going to hold

up any other processes, but I want you to have those 02:58PM 1 discussions. And I say it as a compliment to your bilateral 2 02:58PM 3 professionalism that I actually think it will work to some 02:58PM Sometimes, I send parties out to discuss something 02:58PM 4 5 and I know they're going to come back with the same thing I 02:58PM 6 sent them out to discuss. I don't think that's the case here. 02:58PM 7 So, 60 days to narrow for the Court things that you truly 02:58PM 8 need me to rule on with regard to the request for production 02:59PM 9 of documents. And then I'm going to defer ruling on an award 02:59PM 10 of attorneys' fees and expenses at this point in time. 02:59PM 11 have heard my warning and that's what the federal rules talk 02:59PM 02:59PM 12 about in terms of whether or not you order attorney fees and 13 whether or not the Judge made it clear to parties we're moving 02:59PM 14 forward. 02:59PM I'm looking for good faith, reasonable disputes. 15 02:59PM somebody is stalling or asking for things that they don't 16 02:59PM 17 need, I will be able to see it at this point. Any reason why 02:59PM 18 that approach won't work? 02:59PM 02:59PM 19 MR. CHARNEY: No reason from plaintiffs. 20 MR. QUINN: That sounds completely reasonable to me, 02:59PM Judge. 21 Thank you. 02:59PM 22 THE COURT: All right. That's what I had. 02:59PM 23 missing anything? 02:59PM MR. CHARNEY: Maybe one other -- I don't know if this 24 02:59PM 25 falls within the meeting to defer on the other document 03:00PM

03:00PM	1	request, but I know Ms. Wilner was prepared to discuss the
03:00PM	2	thing regarding the ECAC documents, but that may fall under
03:00PM	3	this, but I'll let Ms. Wilner answer that one.
03:00PM	4	MS. WILNER: I think that would fall under those were
03:00PM	5	part of the fourth set of RFPs. And so, we can have a more
03:00PM	6	specific discussion that the Court ordered.
03:00PM	7	THE COURT: Any other things from the defendants'
03:00PM	8	perspective that I did not address?
03:00PM	9	MR. QUINN: I don't believe so, Judge. The only
03:00PM	10	thing on the depositions, there has been one deposition
03:00PM	11	conducted already. Is it 20 in addition to that or is it 19?
03:00PM	12	What is the specific
03:00PM	13	THE COURT: Twenty now. So, the one counts. And
03:00PM	14	then, we're going to circle back around and come up with what
03:00PM	15	happens next.
03:00PM	16	MR. QUINN: That sounds fine with me. I will note
03:01PM	17	that there was a fifth notice to produce and a third set of
03:01PM	18	interrogatories that we responded to last week and I think we
03:01PM	19	might have to work through those. We're not at that point
03:01PM	20	yet, but we have responded to those, so that's another thing
03:01PM	21	that is out there.
03:01PM	22	THE COURT: Okay. I'll keep track of this case. You
03:01PM	23	have your deadline. I was not planning on issuing a written
03:01PM	24	order. If you need one, it will be found in the transcript.
03:01PM	25	Anybody not clear as to how the Court has ruled, needs

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                clarification at this point or is it abundantly clear what's
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                expected of everybody at this point? And we'll start with the
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               plaintiff.
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                         MR. CHARNEY: Yes, Your Honor. Fair to us.
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                         THE COURT: Mr. Quinn?
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                         MR. QUINN: Yes, I think so, Judge. Thank you.
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                                      And that was the right answer for both of
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                         THE COURT:
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                you, so that's good. All right. Thank you for your courtesy
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                and your professionalism. You are free to leave this meeting
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                         MR. QUINN:
                                      Thank you, Judge. Thanks everybody.
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                         MS. WILNER: Bye.
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                         MR. JOACHIM: Thank you.
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                (Proceedings concluded at a.m. p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER In accordance with 28, U.S.C., 753(b), I certify that this is a true and correct record of the proceedings held in the United States District Court for the Western District of New York before Judge Christina Reiss, on December 14th, 2020. s/ Megan E. Pelka, RPR Megan E. Pelka, RPR Transcriber